

HPS

Worcestershire

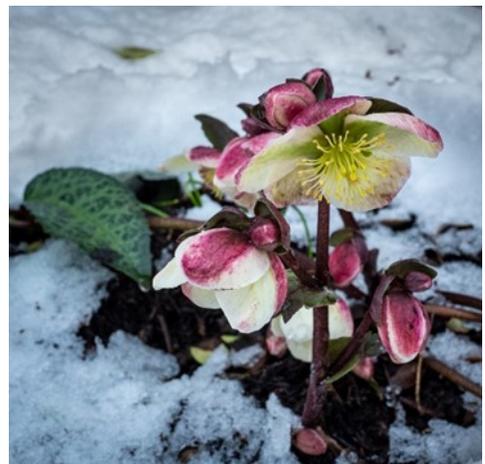
Interim Newsletter January 2021



From the editor

A very warm welcome to our first 'interim' electronic newsletter which we hope will bridge the gap between our more formal newsletters of Autumn 2020 and Spring 2021 . I hope this finds you all safe and well and many will hopefully be receiving their vaccinations as I type. The committee feel it is important to keep in touch with the membership given the absence of face to face meetings, the continuing restrictions and the uncertainties surrounding Covid. We continue to meet and plan events but await guidance and developments along with everyone else.

For this edition committee members have contributed a mix of articles, photos, information and even a poem. Also included are suggestions for on-line garden related events or TV programmes. I hope you enjoy the contributions and it helps you to feel connected to the group until we can meet up in person. I hope you enjoy the beginnings of Spring in your gardens. *Pam Norrington (photos by Keith Norrington)*



From the Chair

THE JOY OF GROWING PLANTS FROM SEED

In the last year, I have found myself thinking about the similarities between ourselves in 2020 and the wartime experiences of my parents' generation: the enforced separation from loved ones, the threat of death, bereavement and living with restrictions on our freedom. Communities are also coming together to support each other through the fear and anxiety. Young people's lives and careers being blown off course by world events beyond their control.

In 1939, those left behind at home turned to growing food to eke out their rations. While my father was away with the Army, my mother lived at home with her parents and younger sister; she helped her father to grow fruit and vegetables and they also kept chickens. In 2020 there was an increase in the number of people wanting to grow their own food from seed. When our survival is threatened, our instincts tell us to secure the things we can control and care for those around us. However bad things seem at the moment, we must be brave and resourceful like previous generations; by this time next year life will hopefully be better and we will just have another annual vaccination to get along with the flu jab.

Our love of gardening often comes from being encouraged as a child to plant seeds; my mother gave me a packet of Radish seeds and a small bed of soil under an old Pear tree and so my love affair with plants began. I sow seeds every year, especially flower seeds like Sweet Peas that give me so much pleasure during the summer.

Each year I try to grow at least one perennial as well as annuals. In 2020 I sowed a tray of Di-erama seeds collected from a plant growing in my garden which I had bought when I visited Keith Wiley's Wildside garden a few years ago; there was almost 100% germination!

I am fond of Herbaceous Clematis, so I also sowed a tray of *Clematis integrifolia* and now I have a dozen new plants which will find a place in the garden in 2021. If you have not attempted growing perennials from seed, do look through your seed catalogues now and give it a try in 2021 it can be very rewarding. *Lyn Maile*

MUSINGS ON POTTING SHEDS

After happily spending so much time in my garden during lockdown number one this year, I reluctantly decided that my tool shed (an old summerhouse inherited with the house over thirty years ago) could not be patched up any longer: the floor was crumbling, the doors were either hanging off or jammed shut and the roof leaked so much rain that I was worried the electric socket would short out the house.



I decided I would treat myself to a real tool shed with visions of every tool in its rightful place and coming immediately to hand when needed! So, it was after much online research, in June I went to D&J Timber Buildings in Worcester and looked around all their range of outbuildings, reveling in the smell of freshly cut timber, meeting real people in the flesh and choosing between different timbers, sizes, shelving and windows. On placing my order, however, I was told that they were having a bumper year and not to expect it before the Autumn and so I settled down to wait.

I spent more time in the garden. I enjoyed looking at my roses and if I had to pick my two favourites this year they would be a beautiful soft apricot Rosa Chicago Peace; a hybrid tea with a shrubby habit obtained free from the Telegraph a few years ago and secondly a reliable free-flowering white polyantha Rosa Katharina Zeimet which is smothered in clusters of double white flowers in two long flushes every year and which even looks good in winter with shiny deep burgundy stems.



I also enjoyed clearing some land of dead trees, brambles and nettles with the plan of establishing a flower meadow

with my two helpers lying on the tonne bag as usual !



Then in October my shed arrived! The old one came down and was taken away and the new went up, all in one afternoon. It is wonderful and I can now usually be found (and heard!) hammering in large nails and arranging and rearranging tools and other bits and pieces to my heart's content. This should keep me going until the spring: an excellent "woman cave"! *Claire Constantine*

From the Treasurer

I wanted to say a big “Thank You” to everyone who has already settled their 2021 Membership Subscription, by whatever means. It is a great help to me to have over 80 members already “sorted”, and I am sure many more of you will be following suit in the very near future.

With such a packed Speaker Diary, again this year - hopefully soon to be heard in person - trips and Newsletters too, please do contact me if you have any queries or would like any assistance regarding your membership renewal.

A few reminders in case useful:

- Annual Membership to HPS Worcestershire Group is £12.50
- Payment can be made by Bank Transfer, Cheque - or even cash if you contact me so that we may make arrangements
- A reminder that to be a member of our local group, you need also to be a member of the National HPS.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to read this, and I look forward to getting to know many of you just as soon as we can reconvene our Saturday meetings.

Ange Burnet

A Message from the Speaker Secretary

We were looking forward to our move to St. Peter's last September .. it didn't happen and here we are in January 2021 in lockdown again until mass vaccinations enable us to get out and socialise once more. As a person who is not keen on zoom and who prefers talking to people in person rather than via a screen, it has been difficult as I am sure it has been for you all.

I have endeavoured to try and create a mixed programme for this year. I'm hoping, that when needed, I can change most of the speakers who would have talked in person to a zoom meeting instead. This it is on-going. I am re-arranging those that can't do zoom to give their talks next year. These changes can be found on the HPS Worcestershire part of the website.

We are joining Herefordshire and Mid Wales for our meeting on **Saturday February 13th at 2pm**, Adam Pascoe's talking about 'Growing the Best Glorious Plants'. You will notice he is speaking again in July. This is because I already had booked him before we were asked to join the other HPS groups but it will be a different talk next time.

Weds. 17th March 7p.m. sees Tim Walker doing a new talk called 'Paradise Lost and Found'. A super entertaining speaker who I would listen to time and again.

I am investigating a new speaker for **April** on zoom. Keep an eye on the website for updates. I will where possible book the speakers on a Saturday afternoon at 2pm, otherwise it will be during the week on a Wednesday or Thursday evening at 7pm.

Take care and keep safe.

Stephanie Reader

Anne Bard ponders rare plants and sunnier times...

The Haleakala Silversword

In these times of staying home and staying safe, I don't know about you but I am thinking more about holidays to come and also holidays past, flicking through old photographs and holiday diaries.

In 2001, two months after the Twin Towers Disaster, I took a holiday in Hawaii. It was a walking holiday which meant I was able to see at close hand the flora of the country. As people will know, the islands are formed of volcanic lava and ash and new islands in the volcanic chain are being formed under the Pacific all the time.

The flora now seen in Hawaii has taken thousands of years to establish. It is estimated that only one plant every 90,000 years was added to the Hawaiian landscape. There are three categories of flora – endemic, native and introduced. Over time, the introduced species have caused the disappearance of many endemic varieties. Of 50,000 endemic species, only 2,600 remain today.

The first island we visited, Maui, allowed us to see a unique plant, the Haleakala Silversword (*argyroxiphium sandwicense* subsp. *macrocephalum*). It is a member of the Asteraceae family. Silverswords only grow in Hawaii and the only other place you can see them is at Mauna Lau, which has its own subspecies of the plant. The Haleakala crater is the world's largest dormant volcano and the plant is found at elevations above 2,100 m.

The plant consists of low growing rosettes of fleshy leaves and silvery hairs. It can survive in hot dry climates like the Aeolian desert cinder slopes of the Haleakala crater. Silverswords live between 3 years and 90 years and flower only once, sending up a spectacular flowering spike. This spike can be up to 6 feet tall and contains 600 individual purple flowers. It is pollinated by flying insects. Once flowered, the plant will go to seed and die.

The Hawaiian name for this plant is 'ahinahina' meaning 'grey, grey'.

In the past, the number of Silverswords has been depleted through being eaten by animals and ripped up by tourists. The plant is now designated a threatened species and is federally protected. The biggest threat currently is from climate change where hotter temperatures and lower rainfall may threaten them. Park staff and researchers are looking at ways these plants can be preserved.

I feel very lucky to have seen and photographed these amazing plants.

(Ref: Hawaii National Park Service)

Anne Bard.



Stephanie Reader on the change from Winter into Spring:

Signs of Spring



We awoke at the end of December to a garden full of snow. Quite a surprise as it wasn't forecast. The temperature remained around or below zero for more than a week. The snow eventually melted completely on January 11th. Our garden is large but north facing and at this time of year the sun being low in the sky meant that the snow stayed longer than most places. I worried about my tender perennials, will they survive I thought covered in snow for so

long.

The 12th January was a fine sunny day and I ventured out into the garden for the first time this year. I was amazed by how many plants, having had a cold covering for so long, were showing signs of life. I got into my stride cutting back the blackened michaelmas daisies and doing some shrub pruning. The garden which I can see from the house seems tidier and ready to put on a growth spurt in the coming weeks. I am afraid I am a fair-weather gardener but have promised myself to go out as much as possible, weather permitting as being outside makes you feel more alive, mindful and purposeful. Especially when you can see what you have achieved, sitting inside in the warm.

Yes there are signs of spring, a few pink buds on the camellia, hellebore heads pushing upwards, primroses in bud and even some daffodils out earlier than usual. Nature is a curious and

Signs of spring at Canal House garden:

wonderful thing! *Stephanie Reader*



Photography Nigel Reader

GARDEN ATTRACTION

I wonder what gets you into the garden when it's cold and wintery...

For me, it's usually seeing green shoots of my snowdrops but this year is different.

I have a repeat infestation of the whiskery type of creature that is fleet of foot and a food thief i.e. 'Roland (rat)' or 'Minnie (mouse)'. These rodents are the bane of my enclosed small garden.

I have tried many deterrents such as blocking holes or runs, poison bait and removing my compost bin even though it never contained food scraps. The local pest control bloke said my garden was too full of plants and undergrowth! So, my insect friendly grasses and shrubs were hoiked out. I realise this is contrary to the current idea of keeping the 'untidy' parts of the garden for wildlife but needs must.

When this failed, I employed a commercial pest control chap who said that two treatments should do the job-it took 5 visits. All was fine for a few years. Then came Covid and extreme

Cold with fluffed up birds perching and pecking at the frozen ground. I relented and carefully put food on the bird table but removing it at dusk. Back came evidence of rats and mice! The worst measure was to stop feeding the birds; as you know it's a joy to see them especially as we are mostly housebound for the time being and they are a good distraction.

Recently the rat evidence has been too close to the back door for any more complacency and my 'live and let live' approach changed to steely determination that it's them or me!

The only thing I can't bring myself to do is to set traps as I could not empty them. Perhaps I can train my useless Jack Russell who is so excited when she gets a whiff of them and rushes around frantically but never catches anything.

So, if anyone has any tips-do tell!

I'm not all gloomy I do look at the lovely things that are coming up in the garden. I hope you like them too.

Judy Templeton

Judy's more welcome garden residents:



A POEM-OUTSIDE AT DAWN

Best time to marvel at your flowers
Before the onward coming hours –
The perfect time to be alone
Without the stress or mobile phone.
The time to plan what you will do
With no one interrupting you.
A quiet time to come on down
And wander in your dressing gown.
A peaceful time to stroll out there
Or take the nearest garden chair,
And think about your space a bit
And wonder what might add to it.
Just pottering around the lawn
Can often make one feel reborn.
There's so much stress around today,
But out there it can float away.
And once you're through the garden
door,
Some things don't matter any more,
Or far less than they did before
I think that's what a garden's for.

Unknown



Photography Nigel Reader

Other garden related events and activities

Here are some suggestions from committee members of on-line events and T.V. programmes which may be of interest to members. My thanks to Petra, our Publicity Secretary for regularly keeping us up to speed with online talks, lectures etc. and to Stephanie our Speaker Secretary for the NGS reminder. I have checked out some other TV programmes and can also recommend the Gardener's World webinars having recently attended a Pruning workshop presented by David Hurrion. Everyone will have different interests and levels of knowledge so to borrow a quote "Don't shoot the messenger" if they turn out not to be what you were looking for. *Pam editor*

Online Events:

Thurs 28th January 'Listening to the land-shaping our box'-Marian Boswell.

Marian is known for responsible, thoughtful and immersive beautiful gardens. In this talk she will discuss some of the less obvious things going on in her garden designs, from creating spiritual sanctuary for ourselves and other creatures, to tapping in to the earth's energy to shape sustainable spaces to thrive.

<https://ebts.org/uk-events/shaping-our-box/>

Jimi Blake-A Year at Hunting Brook Gardens

A series of monthly masterclasses on the last Thursday of the month from February to November. Follow the evolution of this unique garden through the seasons.

<https://hunting-brook-gardens.myshopify.com/collections/courses>

Garden Museum <https://gardenmuseum.org.uk>

Recording available of Toby Musgrave's recent lecture: <https://gardenmuseum.org/events/online-event-the-garden-with-toby-musgrave/>

NGS Events online <https://ngs.org>

Tuesday 2nd February 'Goodnestone, the story of a garden.'

Tuesday 16th February 'My garden Journey-Ordnance House, Wiltshire.'

Tuesday 16th March 'Triumphant tulips with Philippa Burrough at Ultning Wick.'

T.V Programmes

BBC2 Your Garden Made Perfect-begins Thursday February 4th.

BBC4 Winter Walks available on TV catch-up or i-player <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000qd6w/episodes/guide>

A new discovery whilst searching :

BBC Northern Ireland 'Gardening Together with Diarmund Gavin' available on catch up or BBC i-player. Episode 1 is a mix of advice, design, garden tips and an interview with Helen Dillon.

If you enjoy rapid garden makeovers:

ITV Thursdays **3.00 a.m.** 'Love your garden'. Alan Tichmarsh rejuvenates gardens for worthy recipients. (Best recorded rather than viewed at this time!)

Another series with various back episodes available on catch-up and BBC i-player:

BBC 'Garden Rescue' with Charlie Dimmock and the Rich brothers

BBC2/Scotland 'The Beechgrove Garden' – not currently broadcasting or available on iPlayer but on-line only.

Finally:

I hope you have enjoyed our first 'interim' newsletter and found something of interest to help pass the time. We are planning that the Spring Newsletter is produced in the usual format and I will soon be emailing or phoning members with a request for articles. I would be pleased to receive your comments and feedback on this 'mini' newsletter.

In the meantime, stay safe and hopefully it won't be too long before we can all meet in person. *Pam Norrington, editor* editor@worcs-hardy-plants.org.uk